

## **Illinois Early Learning Council**

**January 31, 2005**

100 W. Randolph, James R. Thompson Center, Room 2-025 Chicago  
Department of Central Management Services, Room 104, Springfield  
9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

### **MEETING MINUTES**

**Members Present:** Ann Alvarez, Martha Arntson, Lori Baas, Barbara Bowman (for Arne Duncan), Mary Ellen Caron, Martina Casey, George Davis, Mark Donahue, Claudia Fabian, Marilu Galan, Phyllis Glink, Vinni Hall, Kay Henderson, Gwendolyn Kenner Johnson (for Carol Adams), Lanita Koster, Janet Maruna, Samuel Meisels, Cordelia Meyer, Harriet Meyer, Janice Moenster, Cynthia Moreno (for Bryan Samuels), Claudia Quigg, Elliot Regenstein, Adele Simmons, Rory Slater (for Eric Whitaker), Michael Smith (for Roseanna Ander), Luz Maria Solis, Jerry Stermer, Judy Walker Kendrick, Maria Whelan, Katie Williams (for Joyce Thomas)

**Absent:** Ellen Alberding, Guy Alongi, Gayla Boomer, Constance Brown, Ellen Collins Bush (for Wanda Newell), Representative Elizabeth Coulson, Representative Deborah Graham, Senator Don Harmon, Judy Johnson, Richard Jones, James Kaplan, Barry Maram, Louanner Peters, Senator Carol Ronen, Carolyn Newberry Schwartz, Leo Smith

- **Welcome**

The meeting was called to order at 9:17 a.m. by Elliot Regenstein. He introduced and welcomed new Council member Dr. Vinni Hall, representing the Illinois State Board of Education.

- **Adoption of Minutes**

Harriet Meyer asked that the Council review minutes from the previous meeting. Samuel Meisels made a motion to adopt the December 6, 2004 Early Learning Council meeting minutes. Luz Maria Solis seconded the motion, and it passed by unanimous vote.

- **Update on the Early Learning Council's Preschool For All Plan Review Process**

Elliot Regenstein reported that the Preschool For All written plan is in the process of being drafted. When a complete draft is ready for review, it will be circulated to Early Learning Council Executive Committee members. After their review, all Council members will have the opportunity to review and comment on the plan.

- **Presentation and Discussion on Building the Early Childhood Workforce of the Future**

**Jan Maruna and Cordelia Meyer presented information on early childhood workforce development.** They presented recommendations of the Workforce Development Committee of the Early Learning Council and facilitated a discussion of broad early childhood workforce development issues. They reiterated the Council vision that all children enter school well

prepared, and stated that their Committee's recommendations provide a framework for establishing and maintaining an early childhood workforce that will be well-prepared to assist children to be successful in school. A lively discussion followed their power point presentation.

- Judith Walker Kendrick voiced her overall support for the recommendations, but suggested that more supports for programs are needed so that teachers can take advantage of staff development and educational opportunities. She talked about the importance of providing substitute teachers to sites, and that this should be explicitly stated as a critical need in workforce development plans. Dea Meyer acknowledged this point, and added that there is also a need for more night and weekend classes to meet the professional development needs of early learning staff. Judy Walker Kendrick replied that while this is important, it is more important to offer substitutes as it is often unrealistic to ask providers to attend night or weekend programs after working all day.
- Jerry Stermer asked for clarification regarding the difference between the proposed budgeting costs of scholarships and higher education funding. Julia DeLapp explained that the committee looked at how many teachers and administrators would be needed to implement Preschool For All, examined what qualifications practitioners in the current workforce would need to achieve, and estimated an average cost per credit to achieve those qualifications. Because the budget was a 5-year projection, the total cost was divided by five to reflect annual costs over five years.
- Maria Whelan asked if it was expected that teachers and providers would be able to achieve the recommended teacher qualifications within the 5 year projection presented in the budget documents. She cautioned that this might be an extremely aggressive timeline, and stated that New Jersey approached teacher qualification attainment aggressively, which resulted in the current workforce being replaced with new teachers. Julia DeLapp replied that the 5-year figures were used for budgeting purposes only.
- Vinni Hall recommended that web-based training be made available to providers needing to complete educational coursework.
- Sam Meisels questioned how the amount of money budgeted for higher education (\$1.6 million per year) will double the number of certified teachers graduated by early childhood higher education institutions' teacher preparation programs. Sam stated that this amount was too low. Julia DeLapp replied that public institution tuition was used in creating the budget model. Sam Meisels questioned the accuracy of that assumption, stating that there are few public institutions in Illinois providing education for early childhood professionals, and that private schools play a major role in educating practitioners.
- George Davis commented that this plan would establish a system that will allow people to look ahead to see how to progress through the early childhood field. The proposed Pathways to Opportunity professional development system will also ensure that all staff that have the same credentials will possess the same competencies.
- Janice Moenster asked if scholarship funds will be provided through the TEACH or other current scholarship programs. She expressed concern that many providers and teachers will not meet the criteria of these programs. Jan Maruna replied that the committee is both looking into TEACH and into other scholarship program models.

- Judy Walker Kendrick commented that other models do exist, and suggested that Illinois Student Assistance Commission programs should also be explored. She added that she hoped that service agencies would not need to contribute more to TEACH than is already expected.
- Maria Whelan suggested that it is important to look at funding cuts in child care because those cuts will impact the availability of funds for scholarships.
- Elliot Regenstein thanked the committee for their report.

- **Preschool For All Priorities Survey**

**Elliot Regenstein asked all members to fill out a Preschool For All quality component priorities survey.** He acknowledged that, if the Preschool For All program is adopted, cost pressures may influence the way Preschool For all is implemented. In that event, he would hope that the Council, through ranking their priorities in the survey, will be able to provide the Governor and General Assembly with guidance about which quality components are the most important for phasing in first. He added that while it is clear that all quality components are important, funding may not be available to implement all pieces at the same time. Elliot asked that members complete the survey, giving the highest rating to no more than 8 components, and that surveys be returned by February 4, 2005. All survey responses will be kept confidential

- Sara Slaughter asked whether member recommendations will become the quality pieces required of a program that wishes to be a Preschool For All site, or if other components for which programs would not receive funding would also be required of them. Elliot Regenstein replied that it is unfair to require components that are unfunded.
- George Davis clarified that the priority recommendations are suggestions in the case of limited funding. He stated it is important for members to remember that the total vision of the Council will be presented to the Governor in the Preschool For All plan.
- Tim Carpenter asked if Preschool For All will be proposed. Elliot Regenstein replied that he is unsure, but that the report is being completed in the hope that funding will become available.
- Maria Whelan asked what work the members of the Early Learning Council might be able to do to advance the possibility that the plan will be presented and adopted. Elliot Regenstein encouraged members, in their roles as early childhood advocates, to continue to work for young children. Because of the statutory role of the Council, he recommended that the Early Learning Council itself not play an advocacy role in the process.
- George Davis wondered if it was yet clear how the Preschool For All recommendations would be turned into legislation. Elliot Regenstein replied that this is still undecided, as it depends somewhat on the preferences of General Assembly members. Nancy Shier added that advocacy groups will be pursuing substantive legislation, but will not be acting on anything that is tied to an appropriation for the program this year because FY06 would be the third year of the Governor's commitment to a \$90 million increase to support services to children at-risk.

Approved by Council on April 29, 2005

- **Next Steps and Wrap Up**

Harriet Meyer reminded members that the next Council meeting is scheduled for April 29, 2005, in Chicago. She commented that, although the Council has been working on Preschool For All recommendations for the past 6 months, this is not the only work of the Council. She suggested that the next few months will be a good time for committees to review their work plans and make plans for future endeavors.

- **Adjournment**

Elliot Regenstein adjourned the meeting at 10:45 a.m.

- **Upcoming Early Learning Council Meetings**

- Friday, April 29, 2005 11:00 am – 1:00 pm
- Monday, July 25, 2005 11:00 am – 1:00 pm
- Monday, November 14, 2005 11:00 am – 1:00 pm